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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 9727

C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 001344

SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO NEA/ARP FOR BMASILKO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2018  
TAGS: [GG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#) [RU](#)  
SUBJECT: SAUDI MFA ON RECOGNITION OF SOUTH OSSETIA, ABKHAZIA

REF: SECSTATE 91894

Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires David Rundell  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On August 31, PolOffs delivered reftel demarche to Ambassador Talal al-Malki, temporarily covering European issues in the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Al-Malki shared that he would seek the counsel of Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal before providing a response. He gave no initial indication of the SAG position regarding Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He noted that the U.S. wanted recognition of Kosovo, but not Abkhazia or South Ossetia, and asked why the situations were different. Poloffs stressed that the historical and political contexts were distinct, and that Kosovo had achieved significant international recognition and was ready to function as a fully sovereign state whereas Russia had failed to find any support for recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: Al-Malki could not provide any insight into Saudi thinking on Abkhazia/South Ossetia, but the SAG is likely to remain silent since it would gain no advantage by taking a public position. Public rejection of Russia's move could antagonize Moscow, which the Saudis want to avoid since they need Russian cooperation in areas of more urgent national interest, principally in countering Iran's influence in the region (this, in part, has also kept the SAG from recognizing Kosovo). On the other hand, public recognition would be out of character for the Saudis and, as they well know, would not go down well with us. END COMMENT.  
RUNDELL